

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Amended) A method for an auction, comprising:

receiving, through a network, a request for an item from a first machine

sending, through the network, the request for the item to a second machine;

receiving, through the network, a first bid from a sender at the second machine,
the first bid being based on the request for the item;

sending, through the network, the request for the item to a third machine;

receiving, through the network, a second bid from a sender at the third machine,
the second bid being based on the request for the item;

ranking the first bid and the second bid based on a comparison of each bid with
the request for the item, the ranking including a first status for the first bid and a second
status for the second bid, the status indicating one of a leading bid and a lagging bid;

initiating a re-bid for each lagging bid, the re-bid initiation including comparing
each leading bid with a pre-set limit for the sender of the lagging bid; and

determining a result of the auction based on the request for the item, the first bid
and the second bid;

wherein the result of the auction is based on a match between the request for the
item and at least one of (i) the first bid and (ii) the second bid, the match including at
least one of (i) an exact match between the request for the item and at least one of the
first bid and the second bid and (ii) at least one of the first bid and the second bid
satisfying the request for the item.

2-5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 6, wherein the request for the item, the first bid, and the second bid include at least one of (i) performance risk of a potential vendor, (ii) price, (iii) warranty and (iv) performance specification of an item.

9-11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising sending the result of the auction to at least one of (i) the first machine, (ii) the second machine and (iii) the third machine.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 12, wherein sender at the first machine submits a second request for a second item based on the result of the auction.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, wherein the second item and the first ~~mentioned~~ item are the same.

16. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the request for the item is sent to the second machine based on (i) the request for the item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

17. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising sending, through the network, an invitation to the first machine to submit the request for the item, the first machine submitting the request for the item based on the invitation.

18. (Currently Amended) A method for an auction, comprising:

receiving, through a network, a request for an item from a first machine;

sending, through the network, the request for the item to a second machine and to a third machine;

receiving, through the network, a first bid from a sender at the second machine and a second bid from a sender at the third machine, the first bid and the second bid being based on the request for the item;

ranking the first bid and the second bid based on a comparison of each bid with the request for the item, the ranking including a first status for the first bid and a second status for the second bid, the status indicating one of a leading bid and a lagging bid;

initiating a re-bid for each lagging bid, the re-bid initiation including comparing each leading bid with a pre-set limit for the sender of the lagging bid; and

determining (i) a first result of ~~[[an]]~~ said auction based on the request for the item and the first bid, (ii) a second result of an auction based on the request for the item and the second bid, and (iii) a third result of an auction based on the first result and the second result.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the request for the item from the potential consumer is based on at least one of (i) a performance specification of the item and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

21. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the determination of the third result of the auction is based on a match between the request for the item and at least one of (i) the first bid and (ii) the second bid, the match including at least one of (i) an exact match between the request for the item and at least one of the first bid and the second bid, and (ii) at least one of the first bid and the second bid satisfying the request for the item.

22. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the request for the item, the first bid, and the second bid include at least one of (i) performance risk of potential vendor, (ii) price, (iii) warranty and (iv) performance specification of an item.

23-24. (Canceled)

25. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 18, further comprising receiving a third bid from at least one of (i) the second computer and (ii) the third computer, the third bid being based on at least one of (i) the first status and (ii) the second status.

26. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the request for the item is sent to the second machine and the third machine based on (i) the request for the item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

27. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising sending, through the network, an invitation to the first machine to submit the request for the item, the first machine submitting the request for the item based on the invitation.

28. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising sending the third result of the auction to at least one of (i) the first machine, (ii) the second machine and (iii) the third machine.

29. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein an operator of the first machine

submits to mediation based on the result of the auction.

30. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein an operator of the first machine submits a second request for a second item based on the third result of the auction.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, wherein the second item and the first mentioned item are the same.

32-69. (Canceled)

70. (Previously Amended) An apparatus for an auction, comprising:

a receiver to receive a request for an item from a first machine, a first bid from a sender at a second machine and a second bid from a sender at a third machine;

a transmitter to send the request for the item to the second machine and to the third machine; and

a processor coupled to the receiver and the transmitter, the processor being configured to:

rank the first bid and the second bid based on a comparison of each bid with the request for the item, the ranking including a first status for the first bid and a second status for the second bid, the status indicating one of a leading bid and a lagging bid;

initiate a re-bid for each lagging bid, the re-bid initiation including comparing each leading bid with a pre-set limit for the sender of the lagging bid; and

determine (i) a first result of an auction based on the request for the item and the first bid, (ii) a second result of an auction based on the request for the item and the second bid, and (iii) a third result of an auction based on the first

result and the second result,

wherein the first bid and the second bid are based on the request for the item.

71. (Original) The apparatus of claim 70, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

72. (Original) The apparatus of claim 71, wherein the request for the item from the potential consumer is based on at least one of (i) a performance specification of the item and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

73. (Original) The apparatus of claim 71, wherein the determination of the third result of the auction is based on a match between the request for the item and at least one of (i) the first bid and (ii) the second bid, the match including at least one of (i) an exact match between the request for the item and at least one of the first bid and the second bid, and (ii) at least one of the first bid and the second bid satisfying the request for the item.

74. (Original) The apparatus of claim 71, wherein the request for the item, the first bid, and the second bid include at least one of (i) performance risk of potential vendor, (ii) price, (iii) warranty and (iv) performance specification of an item.

75. (Canceled)

76. (Original) The apparatus of claim 70, wherein the request for the item is sent to the second machine and the third machine based on (i) the request for the item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

77-102. (Canceled)

103. (Currently Amended) A machine-readable medium having encoded information, which when read and executed by a machine causes a method comprising:

receiving, through a network, a request for an item from a first machine;

sending, through the network, the request for the item to a second machine and to a third machine;

receiving, through the network for an auction, a first bid from a sender at the second machine and a second bid from a sender at the third machine, the first bid and the second bid being based on the request for the item;

ranking the first bid and the second bid based on a comparison of each bid with the request for the item, the ranking including a first status for the first bid and a second status for the second bid, the status indicating one of a leading bid and a lagging bid;

initiating a re-bid for each lagging bid, the re-bid initiation including comparing each leading bid with a pre-set limit for the sender of the lagging bid; and

determining (i) a first result of [[an]] said auction based on the request for the item and the first bid, (ii) a second result of [[an]] said auction based on the request for the item and the second bid, and (iii) a third result of [[an]] said auction based on the first result and the second result.

104. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 103, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

105. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 104, wherein the request

for the item from the potential consumer is based on at least one of (i) a performance specification of the item and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

106. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 104, wherein the determination of the third result of the auction is based on a match between the request for the item and at least one of (i) the first bid and (ii) the second bid, the match including at least one of (i) an exact match between the request for the item and at least one of the first bid and the second bid, and (ii) at least one of the first bid and the second bid satisfying the request for the item.

107. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 104, wherein the request for the item, the first bid, and the second bid include at least one of (i) performance risk of potential vendor, (ii) price, (iii) warranty and (iv) performance specification of an item.

108. (Canceled)

109. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 103, wherein the request for the item is sent to the second machine and the third machine based on (i) the request for the item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

110-129. (Canceled)

130. (Previously Presented) A method for performing an on-line auction, the method comprising:

receiving, via a network, a bid request for an item;

receiving, via the network, at least two responses to the bid request, each response having a sender;

ranking each of the responses as one of leading and lagging;

notifying, via the network, each response sender of the rank of the response; and

initiating a re-bid for each lagging response, the re-bid initiation including comparing each leading response with a pre-set limit for the sender of the lagging response.

131. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 130, wherein the re-bid initiation further comprises:

decreasing the lagging response by an increment amount; and
comparing the decreased lagging response with the leading response upon each incremental decrease.

132. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 130, wherein the leading response is a target price set by the requestor of the bid.

133. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 132, wherein the re-bid initiation further includes decreasing the lagging response by an increment amount, and comparing the decreased lagging response with the target price upon each incremental decrease.

134. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 130, wherein the bid request is based on a performance characteristic of the item.

135. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 130, wherein the bid request is based on a price of the item.

136. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 130, wherein the bid request is based on an identification of the item.

137. (Previously Presented) A method for performing an on-line auction, the method comprising:

receiving, via a network, a bid request for an item;

receiving, via the network, at least two responses to the bid request, each response having a sender;
ranking each of the responses as one of leading, lagging and no-bid;
notifying, via the network, each response sender of the rank of the response; and
initiating a re-bid for each lagging response, the re-bid initiation including comparing each leading response with a pre-set limit for the sender of the lagging response.

138. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 137, wherein the re-bid initiation further comprises:

decreasing the lagging response by an increment amount; and
comparing the decreased lagging response with the leading response upon each incremental decrease.

139. (Previously Presented) A system for an on-line auction, comprising:
receiving means for receiving, via a network, a bid request for an item;
receiving means for receiving, via the network, at least two responses to the bid request, each response having a sender;

ranking means for ranking each of the responses as one of leading and lagging;
notifying means for notifying, via the network, each response sender of the rank of the response; and

initiating means for initiating a re-bid for each lagging response, the initiating means including comparison means for comparing each leading response with a pre-set limit for the sender of the lagging response.

140. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 139, wherein the initiating

means comprises:

decreasing means for decreasing the lagging response by an increment amount;

and

second comparison means for comparing the decreased lagging response with the leading response upon each incremental decrease.

141. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 139, wherein the leading response is a target price set by the requestor of the bid.

142. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 141, wherein the initiating means comprises:

decreasing means for decreasing the lagging response by an increment amount;

and

second comparison means for comparing the decreased lagging response with the leading response upon each incremental decrease.

143. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 139, wherein the bid request is based on an identification of the item.

144. (Previously Presented) A system for an on-line auction, comprising:

receiving means for receiving, via a network, a bid request for an item;

receiving means for receiving, via the network, at least two responses to the bid request, each response having a sender;

ranking means for ranking each of the responses as one of leading, lagging and no-bid;

notifying means for notifying, via the network, each response sender of the rank of the response; and

initiating means for initiating a re-bid for each lagging response, the initiating means including comparison means for comparing each leading response with a pre-set limit for the sender of the lagging response.

145. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 144, wherein the initiating means comprises:

decreasing means for decreasing the lagging response by an increment amount;
and

second comparison means for comparing the decreased lagging response with the leading response upon each incremental decrease.

146. (Previously Presented) A computer program product comprising a computer usable medium having control logic stored therein for causing a computer to provide interactive assistance with performing an on-line auction, the control logic comprising:

first computer readable program code means for receiving, via a network, a bid request for an item;

second computer readable program code means for receiving, via the network, at least two responses to the bid request, each response having a sender;

third computer readable program code means for ranking each of the responses as one of leading and lagging;

fourth computer readable program code means for notifying, via the network, each response sender of the rank of the response; and

fifth computer readable program code means for initiating a re-bid for each lagging response, the initiating means including comparison means for comparing each

leading response with a pre-set limit for the sender of the lagging response.

147. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 146, wherein the fifth computer readable program code means further comprises:

sixth computer readable program code means for decreasing the lagging response by an increment amount; and

seventh computer readable program code means for comparing the decreased lagging response with the leading response upon each incremental decrease.

148. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 146, wherein the leading response is a target price set by the requestor of the bid.

149. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 148, wherein the fifth computer readable program code means further comprises:

sixth computer readable program code means for decreasing the lagging response by an increment amount; and

seventh computer readable program code means for comparing the decreased lagging response with the target price upon each incremental decrease.

150. (Previously Presented) A computer program product comprising a computer usable medium having control logic stored therein for causing a computer to provide interactive assistance with performing an on-line auction, the control logic comprising:

first computer readable program code means for receiving, via a network, a bid request for an item;

second computer readable program code means for receiving, via the network, at least two responses to the bid request, each response having a sender;

third computer readable program code means for ranking each of the responses as one of leading, lagging and no-bid;

fourth computer readable program code means for notifying, via the network, each response sender of the rank of the response; and

fifth computer readable program code means for initiating a re-bid for each lagging response, the initiating means including comparison means for comparing each leading response with a pre-set limit for the sender of the lagging response.

151. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 150, wherein the fifth computer readable program code means further comprises:

sixth computer readable program code means for decreasing the lagging response by an increment amount; and

seventh computer readable program code means for comparing the decreased lagging response with the leading response upon each incremental decrease.